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MEDIA FACT SHEET

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Census shows non-Christian religions continue to grow at a faster rate

- Christianity remained the dominant religion in Australia, although non-Christian religions continued to grow at a much faster rate. Since 1996, the number of people reporting that they are Christian grew from around 12.6 million to 12.7 million, but as a proportion of the total population this number fell (from 71% to 64%). Over the same period, those affiliated with non-Christian faiths increased from around 0.6 million to 1.1 million people, and collectively accounted for 5.6% of the total population in 2006 (up from 3.5% in 1996).
- The most common Christian denominations continued to be Catholic (26%) and Anglican (19%). Since 1996, the number of Australians affiliated with the Catholic church grew by 7% to 5.1 million, while those affiliated with the Anglican faith decreased by 5% to 3.7 million. Other groups to decline were the Uniting Church (by 15% to 1.1 million) and the Presbyterian and Reformed churches (by 12% to 0.6 million). The fastest-growing Christian denomination was Pentecostal, increasing by 26% (to around 220,000).
- Australia's three most common non-Christian religious affiliations were Buddhism (2.1% of the population), Islam (1.7%) and Hinduism (0.7%). Of these groups, Hinduism experienced the fastest proportional growth since 1996, more than doubling to 150,000, followed by Buddhism which doubled to 420,000.
- Those affiliated with Christian denominations were evenly distributed throughout Australia. Catholicism was the most common affiliation in all states and territories except Tasmania, where Catholics (18% of the population) were outnumbered by Anglicans (29%). Of the Christian denominations, the largest increase for all the states and territories was a 48% increase in Pentecostals in New South Wales since 1996. The biggest decrease was in Tasmania, where affiliation with the Uniting Church fell by 23%.
- People affiliated with the main non-Christian religions were clustered in Sydney and Melbourne. In 2006, 47% of Hindus and 47% of those affiliated with Islam lived in Sydney. Around 46% of Australians affiliated with Judaism lived in Melbourne. Similarly, the most common locations of people affiliated with Buddhism were in Sydney (37%) and Melbourne (30%).
- Since 1996, the number of Australian residents who stated no religion increased from 2.9 million to 3.7 million (17% of all residents in 1996 and 19% in 2006). New South Wales had the smallest proportion of its population not affiliated with any religion (14%), and South Australia had the largest proportion (24%).

NB: The figures in this fact sheet exclude overseas visitors. Where an answer to a question has not been provided (i.e. not stated) these occurrences form a separate category in the data and therefore some percentages do not total to 100%.

100%.

Source: ABS 2006 Census.

Table 1. Change in religious affiliations (1996 Census - 2006 Census)

Religion	1996		2006		Growth 1996 - 2006
	'000	%	'000	%	%
Christianity	12 582.8	70.9	12 685.8	63.9	0.8
Catholic	4 799.0	27.0	5 126.9	25.8	6.8
Anglican	3 903.3	22.0	3 718.2	18.7	-4.7
Uniting Church	1 334.9	7.5	1 135.4	5.7	-14.9
Presbyterian and Reformed	675.5	3.8	596.7	3.0	-11.7
Eastern Orthodox	497.0	2.8	544.2	2.7	9.5
Baptist	295.2	1.7	316.7	1.6	7.3
Lutheran	250.0	1.4	251.1	1.3	0.4
Pentecostal	174.7	1.0	219.7	1.1	25.7
Other Christian	653.1	3.7	776.9	3.9	19.0
Non-Christian	616.4	3.5	1 105.1	5.6	79.3
Buddhism	199.8	1.1	418.8	2.1	109.6
Islam	200.9	1.1	340.4	1.7	69.4
Hinduism	67.3	0.4	148.1	0.7	120.2
Judaism	79.8	0.4	88.8	0.4	11.3
Other Non-Christian	68.6	0.4	109.0	0.5	58.8
Inadequately described	54.2	0.3	133.8	0.7	147.1
No Religion	2 948.9	16.6	3 706.6	18.7	25.7
Not stated	1 550.6	8.7	2 224.0	11.2	43.4
Total	17 752.8	100.0	19 855.3	100.0	11.8

Table 2. 2006 Census: Religious affiliations by state/territory

Religion	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Total persons
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	'000
Christianity	67.7	60.5	66.3	59.8	59.3	64.2	54.6	60.2	12 685.8
Buddhism	2.6	2.7	1.2	1.5	1.8	0.5	1.5	2.2	418.8
Hinduism	1.1	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3	1.0	148.1
Judaism	0.6	0.8	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	88.8
Islam	2.6	2.2	0.5	0.7	1.2	0.2	0.6	1.3	340.4
Other Religions	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.4	2.0	0.7	109.0
Inadequately described	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	133.8
No Religion	14.3	20.4	18.6	24.2	22.9	21.5	23.1	23.4	3 706.6
Not stated	10.1	11.2	11.7	12.0	12.8	12.2	17.1	10.2	2 224.0
Total persons ('000)	6 549.2	4 932.4	3 904.5	1 514.3	1 959.1	476.5	192.9	324.0	19 855.3

Table 3. 2006 Census: Religious affiliations by capital city(a)

Religion	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Adelaide	Perth	Hobart	Darwin	Canberra
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Christianity	64.0	58.9	65.4	59.6	59.8	63.9	53.4	60.3
Buddhism	3.7	3.5	1.8	2.0	2.2	0.7	2.2	2.2
Hinduism	1.7	1.1	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.4	1.0
Judaism	0.9	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2
Islam	3.9	2.9	0.8	0.9	1.5	0.3	0.9	1.4
Other Religions	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.7
Inadequately described	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8
No Religion	14.1	20.0	18.9	24.0	22.2	21.6	25.2	23.3

Not stated	10.4	11.1	11.1	11.6	12.0	12.0	16.6	10.2
Total persons ('000)	4 119.2	3 592.6	1 763.1	1 105.8	1 445.1	200.5	106.0	323.1

(a) Capital City Statistical Division.

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